

the Emily

"There's something contagious about demanding freedom."

Robin Morgan,
American feminist and poet.

Volume 4, Number 3
Thursday, January 30, 1986

Virgins and Vampires

by Catherine Lang

The prevalence of syphilis, class consciousness and a surge of feminism in the late 1800's may have provoked a movement in European Art which portrayed women as symbols of extreme good or evil, according to Dr. Elizabeth Tumasonis. In November 1985, Dr. Tumasonis of UVic's Art History Department spoke on Symbolist Art. Her lecture **Virgins & Vampires: Images of Women in Art Around the Turn of the Century** focused on current research she has done.

She uncovered three dominant themes in the depiction of women as symbols: innocence and virginity, grief and remorse, and evil and temptation. Tumasonis concluded that the Symbolists could only associate pleasant things with women in their virginal state.

"In her erotic aspect, the female figure is equated with evil temptation and even destruction." She said the association of sex with death may have been largely due to the prevalence of syphilis in Europe. Women were blamed for countless horrifying deaths because the disease is sexually transmitted.

Tumasonis also explained American writer Vern Bullough's theory. He believes prudish attitudes were a result of industrialization. Chastity was a sign of gentility and status was associated with women who didn't have to work in the factories and who could afford to stay at home.

There is also the possibility that these artists were reacting to the surge of feminism of the late 1800's. Women suffragettes were agitating for the vote, threatening male domination. Tumasonis suggested the artists responded by portraying "the assertive woman as an evil creature."

"Symbolism, an art of expression of emotion and states of mind, was a reaction to Impressionism," she said. Tumasonis pointed out that although there were female impressionist artists, all symbolist artists were men.

Tumasonis said that lilies and ladies dressed in white were symbols used to express innocence and virginity. Czech-born artist Alphonse Mucha paints a girl dressed in white, completely embedded in lilies to represent the young woman in the virginal state.

"Along with this glorification or interest in virginity came a renewal of interest in the ultimate virgin, the Virgin Mary," she said.

After decades of a secular approach to art, a revival of interest in religious themes occurred in the



MUCHA: WOMAN AS INNOCENT VIRGIN
"Lys," a poster by Alphonse Mucha

latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries. These themes emphasized the portrayal of women as the Virgin Mary or as symbols of virginity.

She discovered another predominant theme in Symbolist Art — the depiction of women suffering grief or remorse following the loss

of virginity.

Norwegian artist Edvard Munch painted two pictures illustrating women in transition. We see three female figures as symbols of virginity, sexuality and remorse in "The Dance of Life" and in "Woman in Three Stages". The virgin is in white. The sexual woman is brazenly nude in "Three



MUNCH: WOMAN AS A COHORT OF DEATH
"Death and The Maiden," a dry-point etching by Edvard Munch

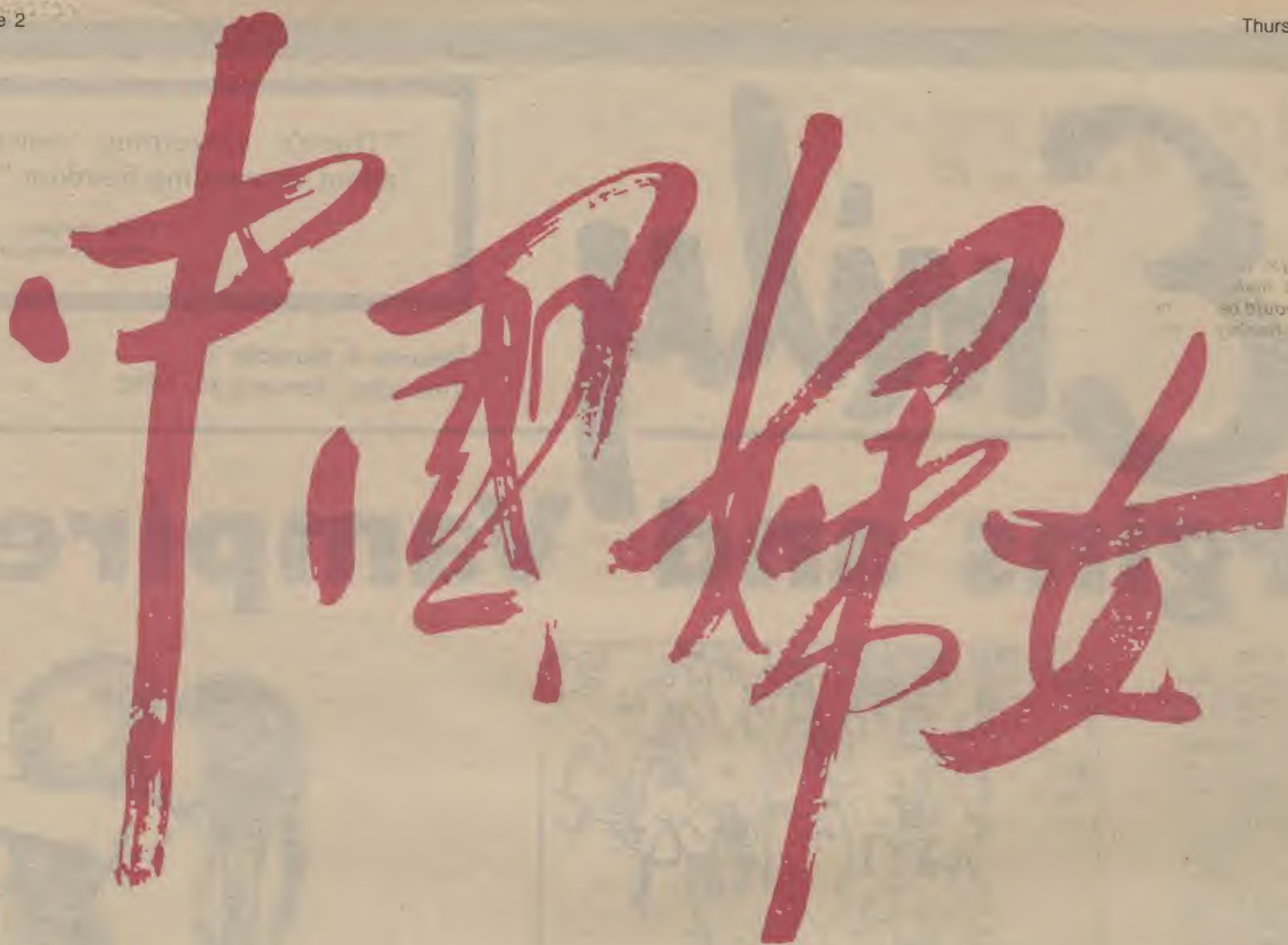
Stages" and a woman with red hair and passionate eyes embraces a man in "Dance". In both pictures the women dressed in black are a sight of deprivation and remorse. Laughter rippled through the class as Tumasonis described these women as looking "like ravaged old hags" after they had engaged in sexual acts.

Gauguin's "Loss of Virginity" is another example of this theme. "We see a young woman lying naked and abandoned in a field, looking extremely remorseful and sorrowful. She has a little animal with her, symbolic, perhaps, of the animal nature of man or the passionate nature of human beings. She is lying in the field with dark bushes separating her from the nice people who

are going to church. She is completely alienated from decent society because she has lost her virginity," explained Tumasonis.

Following the loss of virginity, the female figure represents evil in various forms. Tumasonis gave vivid examples of women portrayed as demonic sinful creatures, sometimes as temptresses to innocent Christian men. She said the biblical character Salome is a strong recurring theme in Symbolist Art. Exquisite Salome danced for her stepfather, King Herod, and came to demand the head of John the Baptist on a platter. The erotic dancer is thus associated with the cruel

CONT. ON PAGE 3



Chinese Women Committed to Change

by Gail Grant

China is emerging as a new nation as a result of its attempts to combine Marxist socialist programs with the more positive aspects of capitalism. The end product is a strong, social structure that is improving the lives of women. Just recently, a Victorian entrepreneur, Kay Armstrong represented Canada in an international delegation of women who were invited to China by the All China Women's Federation. She spoke to *The Emily* about what is being done in China to better the lives of its women:

"Their basic confidence is greater than ours. We tend to question our liberation and where we fit in."

Whereas, among the Chinese women I met, there's no question about their goals and just where they stand in the overall scheme of things. The masses of women are empowered by a strong sense of moral value to themselves and their country. And, because they don't have to question that role, they have more time and energy to fulfil their goals."

Armstrong observed that women retire at 50 from the workplace and at 55 if they're professionals. Their expertise and their abilities are finely honed during their working years. They receive a pension according to the number of years they've worked in that enterprise. In the evening, they're encouraged (by the government and the ACWF) to develop their other talents such as

music, writing, or some other aspect of themselves that is separate from their working lives. After retirement, workers go back into the community as a volunteer and put to use those skills that they developed during their "worker" years. This is a key element in Chinese social structure and it's interesting to note that the Chinese national anthem translated means "the march of the volunteer." These volunteers may work as marriage or child counsellors in the community and it is believed that half of all pending divorces are averted by this approach.

Children are considered to be China's most precious resource and Armstrong said that many times during her tour it was pointed out that children are "the future and the hope of the world." If there is a child who is suffering or in need of social services, then the local volunteers move in to try and alleviate the problem before it gets any worse. The Chinese believe that a child must not be blighted in any way and that only through successful child development can the nation, as a whole, prosper economically and morally.

The 1981 Marriage Laws, which are followed implicitly, indicate that there should be only one child per family. Couples who conceive more than one child go through counselling and are strongly advised to have an abortion. Fathers of children born out of wedlock are held responsible for the whole or part of the cost of the child's education and maintenance till the child can live independently. Child and wife abuse is severely punished by law and offenders must go to counsellors to change their attitudes.

Armstrong was treated with a special warmth and hospitality by the president of the ACWF, Madame Kang Keung, who apparently accompanied Dr. Bethune during the long, hard years of China's revolution. She remembered Bethune giving his own boots to an ordinary soldier. The delegation learned that the ACWF served as a link between the government and the masses of women. It is comprised of women workers, peasants,



Kay Anderson

intellectuals, and other working women of all nationalities; patriotic women who support socialism as well as those who stand for the reunification of the Motherland. Its goals are development, equality, and peace.

In China's workplace, women constitute 70 per cent of the labor force, but work with men as equals. Women are not just workers but also factory directors. There are creches in the factories for children under the age of five. Fathers and mothers go there to feed the children during the day. A pregnant wo-

man can take a year out from work beginning at the seventh month of pregnancy and her maternity pay is allocated according to her past contribution.

Thirty five percent of these students are women who study engineering, automation, social sciences and languages.

Chinese women now enjoy much greater career and educational opportunities. A major reform has been to try and eradicate illiteracy among workers by establishing colleges within factories and industry so that an educational process is taking place concurrently with work life. Thirty-five per cent of these students are women who study engineering, automation, social sciences and languages. Workers who participate in full or part-time education receive full pay and have labor and welfare protection.

Armstrong believes that Chinese women are progressing faster toward a better quality of life because they aren't fettered by competitiveness within their society. They appear to have transcended the barriers of fear and jealousy that block women's social progress. Out of their history of oppression and suffering, a strong sense of dignity rather than bitterness, has evolved. They desire to assist all Chinese women to achieve their full human potential because it is through collective "greatness" that civilization can be fostered and preserved in its fullest flower.

Can the feeling that you are independent and doing your duty, satisfy the longing for other idyls? Oh! Duty is an icy shadow. It will freeze you. It cannot fill the heart's sanctuary.

Augusta Ebans (1835-1909)

Revolution is but thought carried into action.

Alice Rossi, ed., 1973

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ask em

Dear Em,

I'm a mature student and a feminist. I have always just assumed that academic males working in a university would be non-sexist. But what I'm finding since I've returned to school is a lot of really sexist remarks made by professors in my classes. It's so awful to have to sit there and listen to that garbage when what I'd really like to do is to throw something at them. I don't feel that I should start an argument in the classroom because I don't want to alienate my fellow students by taking up their lecture time. What can I do?

Outraged

Dear Outraged,

The biggest enemy that women confront is their own silence. If you don't want to attempt a rebuttal at the time, write down remarks that offend you, and go to the Ombudsperson, Carol Hubberstey, in the SUB. She is the person on campus who receives sexual harassment complaints and then takes them to the Sexual Harassment Committee to be dealt with. Chances are that other women are also having the same problem with this instructor and if enough voices are heard in dissent, then something can be done about it. The Women's Centre or the Counselling Centre are also places where you can air grievances like this and receive support.

Dear Em,

Don't you think the feminist movement would be better off if lesbians stayed out of it? I, for one, am afraid to support the feminists because people might think I'm gay.

Homophobic

Dear Homophobic,

Traditionally, women have related to one another through men. Even feminists can fall into this trap, by dividing ourselves up according to who sleeps with men and who doesn't. We must work towards relating to each other more directly, otherwise, eventually, there'll be a split in the camp, and we'll lose much of the strength we have in numbers.

Dear Em,

I think you were wrong last month when you told a girl not to move in with her boyfriend because he's messy. My boyfriend's apartment was a pigsty before we moved in together, but he's much neater now. People do change, and you should realize it.

So There.

Dear So There,

Glad it worked out. People don't so much 'change' as add on new qualities, which can give them choices they wouldn't otherwise have.

Dear Em,

I'm a single parent with an eleven-month old child. I leave her with my mother all day while I'm at school, and I'm worried about bonding. Should I stay home with her?

Torn

Dear Torn,

Of course you're torn; it's one of the big dilemmas of our society. Dr. Alexander Lowen (bioenergeticist) and Paul Shepard (environmentalist and philosopher) believe that children who do not bond with a parent until they are three years old suffer later in life because of unresolved feelings of abandonment. But in our society, parents often cannot choose this type of bonding. Since you are a single parent, you may feel you must look to the future and prepare yourself to support your daughter as she is growing up. Or you may not be willing to stave off your own intellectual growth for another two years (there would be no point in staying home with her, resenting it all the while).

If you are able or willing to detail your education until she is three, go for it. If it isn't possible, concentrate on making the time you do spend together rewarding for you both. Don't overload your schedule so much that you cannot spend two hours a day, every day, with your daughter.

Dear Em,

Every time I go past the Women's Centre, it's shut. I used to like dropping by there, but the door never seems to be open.

P'd Off

Dear P'd Off,

This has been a problem this year. People have a heavy course load & very little spare time. (The schedule is posted just to the right of the door as you come in.) There is no Great Mother in the centre but there is a part-time co-ordinator, and one other collective member who's committed herself to three hours a week. At present, the centre is open for sure at these times: Mon. 11:30 - 12:30, Tues. 11:30 - 12:30, Weds. 11:30 - 2:30, Thurs. 2:30 - 3:30, and Friday 11:30 to 12:30. We have to be there for each other. By all means, get the key at the SUB office, open up the centre, and be there for an hour or two for someone who would otherwise find the door shut.



Roberta Pazdro and Teresa Sankey

"She Works Hard for Her Money: Women in the Sex Trade" a new video made locally

by Carole Fast

Two local women, Teresa Sankey, and Roberta Pazdro, who produced a video about rock videos aired on Channel Ten in late November, have now produced a new video called *She Works Hard For Her Money: Women In The Sex Trade*.

This video contains interviews with women who have been involved in prostitution, pornography, or stripping. They said that strippers want to be referred to as exotic dancers. Sankey said that they were unable to obtain interviews with anyone from escort services because at the time they were producing the video, the Top Hat trial was also being held.

In the interviews, the women discussed their work and what their jobs were really like. Prostitutes talked about their customers. Exotic dancers described their audiences and the reactions they get from them. Women who have left the sex trade tell what they are doing now.

The most common reason as to why women became involved in the sex trade was one of economics. They were at a certain place in their lives when they looked at their choices and their choice was their most viable option. Pazdro said that there is a split between their work and who they really are as people. The women interviewed were all connected to Victoria either by work, school or a residence. Sankey said the basic purpose of the video was to give these women a chance to talk about their lives based on their own experiences. There's no moral or legal message. It is not an analysis of Women Against Pornography (WAP), the local group the two producers work for. It isn't meant to be thought provoking, trying to show that there are no great differences between "them" and

"us." Production was possible through a Secretary of State grant for Women's Programs and which was fully utilized to complete this latest video. At the moment, they have no plans for future videos. Any public response to the video may be directed to Roberta Paz-

dro, 373 Pooley Place, Victoria, V9A 6Y5. Viewing times on Channel Ten are: January 28 at 7:30 p.m., January 31 at 8 p.m. and February 2 at 10 p.m.

It will then be available to community groups along with an information kit.

DEAR EDITOR:

The November 28th issue of *The Emily* had an article headed, "Act to Save Women's Program Funding," wherein we learned that funding for women's programs is endangered. I've benefited a great deal from these programs and I thought that the least I could do was to send a few letters. I sent a telegram to Brian Mulroney with a copy to my M.P., Alan McKinnon. My message was necessarily brief because of its telegram form. Mr. McKinnon's reply was equally as brief — a standard thankyou opening and a one sentence response:

"As you are no doubt aware, this government is committed to achieving full equality for Canadian women."

Perhaps he felt it was appropriate to reply with equal brevity, but it came across as patronizing "put-off" — something like the current bill that is being passed. It promotes equality, but has no provision for follow-up and no penalties for those who choose to ignore it.

This government is not committed to the full equality of women. It is committed to its own self-interest. Equality for women would threaten that.

Georgia Welles

There is
a sound
in the
forest

By Andrea Nevin

blood is the color
tinting my vision
I hear arrows fly
from my sister's silent bow

there is a sound in the forest
beyond the listening ear
and a dark new color
I have come to know

we stand apart here
in a cave amid wildness
my sister's white love
would fill all that is hollow

but I turn from her vision
and claw through the mossy
stone of our ceiling

I feel the still cry
of its jade agony

like the hush of artillery
flown from my sister's hand

VIRGINS AND VAMPIRES CONT. FROM PAGE 1

and senseless death of a beloved prophet. She is a classic symbol of the beautiful temptress holding the head of her decapitated victim, signifying also women's greed and ambition.

In "Judith II" by Gustav Klimt, Tumasonis described the woman in the painting who is clearly Salome as "a very decorative figure with blood-red lips, exposed breasts, and predatory hands holding the decapitated head."

Vampires and The Sphinx are examples of symbols used to depict women as evil creatures. Edvard Munch often portrayed women as predatory beings. Tumasonis showed three slides of his work where women are portrayed as cohorts of death. In "The Death of Marat", "Vampire", and "Death of the Maiden", women embrace death gladly; with ghosts and skeletons magnifying the central female figure.

BOOK REVIEW

Everywoman's Books Collective
by Bev Cooke

HEALTH AND THE FEMALE ADOLESCENT, Edited by Sharon Golub, Harrington Park Express: New York, Birmingham, 156 pp.

This is not a normal health care book. It does not list do's and don'ts, nor does it attempt to give a simplistic answer to the health problems encountered by adolescent women. It is, rather, a series of technical articles by health care workers and researchers dealing with specifically feminine and adolescent problems.

There are eight articles in the book. Each one deals with a different medical/psychological problem. The topics include: nutritional needs; beauty as it relates to health; first pelvic exam and common gynecological problems in adolescent women; scoliosis; cigarette smoking; pregnancy and its effect on growth and development; and the teen traumas of suicide, drug use and running away from home. This book would certainly prove to be an interesting, informative survey of common adolescent problems for anyone involved in health care for those who may have personally encountered any of these problems.

For example, Rita J. Freedman's article on beauty and adolescent health examines the relationship between women's identity, physical appearance and self esteem; how cultural norms affect this relationship and the effect that this may have on psychological development. She discusses what physical problems occur when young women attempt to become the embodiment of Western beauty. This extends from make-up aggravated acne to the eating disorders of anorexia nervosa and bulimia, and on to the current fad of weight lifting and strenuous physical exercise. Dr. Freedman points out that most of these problems are an outgrowth of the belief that most women are taught that their fortunes lie in their faces and bodies; and that, in order to succeed in this culture, you must be beautiful. She stresses that many of these problems have at least part of their roots in the uncertainty of self that comes from the physical changes in adolescence.

Dr. Barbara Sommer's article which deals with suicide, drug use and running away, is an overview of what might be loosely termed "deviant behaviors". She examines these behaviors with a particular emphasis on young women. Certainly, women are not the only people affected in these areas but the patterns of behavior seem to differ between men and women. She points out that in suicide statistics, many more men than women actually commit suicide but far more women than men attempt the act. Dr. Sommer speculates that a possible reason for this may be the sex role differences. Women are more prone to seek help than men and males are seen as more risk taking than women with their non-successful attempts being labelled as typical teenage boy bravado.

This book was originally published in 1984 under the title "Health Care and the Female Adolescent," and also as "Women and Health." (Volume 9, No. 2/3, Summer/Fall 1984).

THE GREEN PARTY:

Taking a Stand Against The Power-Over Mentality

by Rob Von Rudloff
spokesperson,
UVic Green Party Assoc.

I am a feminist and my vision of feminism includes the concept of freedom and equality for the sexes in an egalitarian, non-hierarchical society. It calls for an end to violence, discrimination and aggression toward women, minority groups and nature. These feminist values also form the main pillars of the Green Party's philosophy.



This sharing of ideologies was relatively unnoticed until recently because of the different terminology used by the two movements. The major objectives of the Green Party of B.C. are to work towards 1) achieving world peace (and implicitly nuclear and general disarmament) 2) building an economic system based upon sound environmental and ecological principles 3) decentralization and 4) respect for all life. These directly imply a non-violent, non-discriminatory society. In even simpler terms, it is the elimination of "power-over" from humanity's way of thinking and operating.

"Power-over" is a feminist term for the exercising of power over another person or thing which is an integral part of the "normal", hierarchical way of our society. Rich nations and ruling elites arrive at such positions by oppressing and exploiting others, whether it be weaker nations or peoples, minority groups, women, or nature. This is what feminists and Greens want to stop completely.

What implications does taking a stand against the power-over mentality have for a political party? A great deal. Hierarchies, where people above direct those below, are seen as undesirable because they inevitably lead to inequalities and injustices. Thus, in the Green Party, there are no leaders or people with power and influence whose words carry more weight than others. Each person in the party has an equal say in policy and decision making. Spokespeople are elected solely to convey the decisions of the group to the public. The position of chairperson at meetings is replaced by that of facilitator, whose role is to aid discussion, not to control it. The lowest, grassroots level of the party wields all of the power.

The position of spokesperson is usually held by someone only for a year or two. This allows for more

people getting the chance to experience the difficulties involved. It also helps to minimize the tendency for any person speaking on behalf of others to acquire the role of leader, particularly when the media assumes them to be such and when other parties treat strong leadership as a desirable trait.

Actual decision making is based on consensus. To people used to the aggressive, confrontational approach of traditional politics, consensus is usually seen as a very slow and tedious (if not impossible) process. However, consensus is based on co-operation. If people truly desire to co-operate and are allowed to express their feelings on an issue and to debate it in a constructive manner, one finds that it doesn't take much longer than the system based on majority vote. And in the long term, it is superior since everyone is satisfied with the results.

To be able to readily function in such a non-traditional manner and to be able to produce appropriate, detailed policy, requires some educating and consciousness-raising for those involved. Thus, Greens have found themselves turning to the feminist movement, which they are realizing has had to grapple with the same concepts. At last summer's fund raising dinner for the Victoria Chapter of the Green Party, well-known local feminist counsellor, Rowena Hunnissett, gave a talk entitled "Feminism and Green Politics". The first two of a series of provincial mini-conference/policy conventions were held before Christmas on the same topic. And on January 23, well-known local feminist psychologist, Sara Joy David, gave a talk entitled "Visionary Politics" at the Victoria Chapter's A.G.M.

The result of these events has been the steady progression of the party towards a much improved state. Not too surprisingly, participation by women in the party has increased significantly. This is vital because women are traditionally excluded in the decision making processes of our society. Quality childcare (involving men) during meetings and events has become a priority to allow participation by women who are normally unable to attend. Ways have been found of identifying and eliminating aggressive, ego-serving actions and attitudes at meetings and events, which tend to stifle active participation by women. The role of women's spirituality in the party has also been discussed. And the feminist movement is hopefully seeing that it is possible to have a political party based on the same principles that they strive for.

Feminism and green politics both embrace a change from existing power structures and a transformation from the inside out. Greens did not have to go to feminists to be converted into feminists, but only to be shown that feminist principles were already there, just as green values are found inside feminism. Both can benefit from the interaction that is occurring.

Calendar

ISLAND WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

WOMEN — TAKING CONTROL OF OUR LIVES

Friday, February 7th. and Saturday February 8th.

Conference begins 7 p.m. Friday, runs from 8:30 a.m. Saturday to 6 p.m. Registration fee for full conference: \$15, for Saturday only, \$10. North Island College, 4006 8th Avenue, Port Alberni.

STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION GROUP

THURSDAY NOONERS

Room 213, 620 View Street, Victoria. Upcoming presentations:

January 23, 12 noon - 1 p.m.

"Girls Can," a video presented by Heather Gibson from Women in Trades.

January 30, 12 noon - 1 p.m.

"Volunteering — Perks and Pressures," a discussion with Coline Neilson.

January 27 and Every Other Monday

Feminist Discussion Group, 7:45 - 9:30 p.m. Room 213, 620 View Street.

Monday, February 17 and Every Other Monday

"Creating Intimacy," a discussion with Janet Telford. 7:45 - 9:30 p.m. Room 213, 620 View Street.

Saturday, March 1st.

A workshop entitled "Sharing Lives: Lesbian Couples." Phone 381-1012 for details of time, place, fee, etc.

UVIC WOMEN'S CENTRE COLLECTIVE

Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m.

Weekly meeting at The Women's Centre, SUB.

Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m.

Women's Support Group meets at the Women's Centre, SUB.

LECTURE SERIES FOR WOMEN

Wednesdays During January and February, from 7 to 10 p.m.

The Political Science Women's Caucus at UVic, and The Status of Women's Action Group will be co-sponsoring a lecture series designed to provoke discussion and an appreciation of feminist issues within an academic environment. Admission is free, and the series is open to all women in the community. MacLaurin, Room D-114. For more information, contact Pam Whitaker, 477-4120; or Katherine Watson, at 385-6657.

February 5

"The Politics of Reproduction," with Christine St. Peter.

February 12

"Feminism and Marxism," with Stella Lord.

February 26

"A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Women," with Mahinder Doman.

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Fri. - Sat. 10 am - 9 pm

Sunday 12 noon - 5 pm

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the Emily STAFF BOX

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